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PACKAGING

THE CAHNERS MAGAZINE FOR DECISION-MAKERS/MAY 1990

IT'S IN THE BAG

Foodservice Pushes Packagers To Flexibles

How To Boost Your Labeling Speeds

Sterile Solution Line Solves Transfer Problem

Worldstars Showcase Unique Packaging

Sample Piggybacks On Shaving Gel

How To Specify Polyethylenes

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Machinery Sales To Hold Their Own In 1990

But price becomes more important buying factor

Packaging machinery buyers remain optimistic in the face of uncertain economic conditions for the balance of 1990. Buying trends are stable—but price has become more a factor.

More than 1,300 packaging professionals, involved in the packaging of food, drugs and a variety of other products, responded to PACKAGING's annual Equipment Survey early this year.

For the first time, we polled packaging professionals involved in SICs 34 (Fabricated Metal Products), 35 (Non-electrical Machinery), 36 (Electrical and Electronic Equipment) and 38 (Instruments and Related Products), as well as SICs 20 (Food and Kindred Products) and 28 (Chemicals and Allied Products).

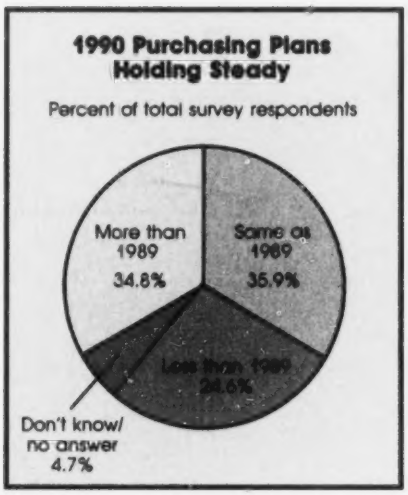
While more than 70% of the responses still came from packagers involved in food and diverse chemical packaging, we also received input from professionals involved in buying machinery for packaging of items as diverse as computers, motors, appliances, medical devices, typewriters and fasteners.

PACKAGING editors will be drawing on the information from this survey for several upcoming articles. However, here is a synopsis of the most relevant findings as they relate to machinery buying trends.

A third will spend more

Managers who responded to our survey authorize, specify or determine the need for new packaging machinery. And 34.8% of them said they expect their companies to spend more on equipment in 1990 than they did in 1989. Another 35.9% expected the expenditure for 1990 to be about the same as it was in 1989, and 24.6% predicted that their companies would spend less money on new packaging equipment this year than last.

How does that translate to actual purchasing dollars? Although 7% of respondents said they plan to spend nothing at all on machinery in 1990, and more than 28% said they'll spend less than $25,000 this year, another another 22% plan to spend from $25,000 to $99,999. A healthy 21% said they will purchase between $100,000 and $499,999 worth of packaging machinery in 1990. And 12% will spend big—more than $500,000 this year.



More than one-third of packaging professionals responding to PACKAGING's annual equipment survey say they plan to spend more on packaging machinery in 1990 than they did in 1989.

Changeover ease most important

The survey asked packagers to rank the machinery features and attributes that are most important to them when they consider the purchase of a piece of machinery.

The top three in this year's ranking are unchanged: "Simplicity of changeover" again ranked as the most important feature with potential machinery buyers. Next came "cleans without disassembly," followed by "maximum speed." These are also unchanged from last year's survey.

However, the price of the machine is far more important to this year's respondents than it was just one year ago. "Price" jumped from No. 10 in last year's ranking to No. 5 this year. It appears that while flexibility and high performance are still of paramount importance to buyers, these professionals are also being forced to consider initial cost more carefully than before.

Rounding out the top five in this year's survey was "handles wide range of materials/containers," which jumped to No. 4 from No. 6 last year.

Bring me a bar coder

Equipment to code, mark or label a package will be among the items on many packagers' machinery wish lists this year. Leading that list is bar coding and scanning equipment, with 16.4% of respondents planning to purchase such a unit in the next year.

Exactly 15% said they will purchase a labeler within the next 12 months. Another 16% will buy an ink-jet printer in the next year, and 14.7% said they will purchase an unspecified type of coder.

Respondents were asked to reflect not only on past and projected machinery purchases, but also on electronic control, reporting and management information systems that boost line efficiency.

When asked whether any or all of their packaging lines or operations were tied in to a plant-wide or company-wide management information system, more than 15% said yes. Some 68% tie in individual machines to such a system, while 48% said they tied groups of machines on a line to an MIS system. Half said they tie one or more entire lines to the system.

Even those companies that haven't yet instituted management information systems are thinking about doing so. Of those that are not yet tied into a system, almost 12% said they plan to do so within the next 12 months. And, with or without such a system, almost 40% of respondents said they use some sort of electronic production data reporting system.

—Melissa Larson

PRICE IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT

1990 Rank		1989 Rank
1.	Simplicity of changeover	1.
2.	Cleans without disassembly	2.
3.	Maximum speed	3.
4.	Handles wide range of materials/containers	6.
5.	**Price**	**10.**
6.	Extra guarding for safety	4.
7.	Cleanup/changeover without tools	5.
8.	Built-in programmable controllers	9.
9.	Diagnostic panel lights & alphanumeric displays	7.
10.	Open construction for accessability	8.

Price of a piece of machinery is more important to potential buyers of packaging equipment this year than last. While high performance is still paramount, cost concerns are creeping in.